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Groups of countries in special situations: specific actions related to the particular needs and problems of landlocked developing countries: outcome of the International Ministerial Conference of Landlocked and Transit Developing Countries and Donor Countries and International Financial and Development Institutions on Transit Transport Cooperation

Letter dated 27 September 2011 from the Permanent Representative of Paraguay to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

In my capacity as Chair of the Group of Landlocked Developing Countries, I have the honour to transmit herewith the communiqué adopted at the Tenth Annual Ministerial Meeting of Landlocked Developing Countries, held on 23 September 2011 in New York (see annex).

I should be grateful if the present letter and its annex could be circulated as a document of the General Assembly, under agenda item 22 (b).

(*Signed*) Jose Antonio **Dos Santos**
Ambassador
Permanent Representative

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Annex to the letter dated 27 September 2011 from the Permanent Representative of Paraguay to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

Communiqué of the Tenth Annual Ministerial Meeting of Landlocked Developing Countries

New York, 23 September 2011

We, the Ministers for Foreign Affairs of landlocked developing countries, having met in New York on 23 September 2011 on the sidelines of the sixty-sixth session of the General Assembly of the United Nations,

Recalling the Almaty Declaration[1] and the Almaty Programme of Action: Addressing the Special Needs of Landlocked Developing Countries within a New Global Framework for Transit Transport Cooperation for Landlocked and Transit Developing Countries,[2] adopted in Almaty, Kazakhstan, in 2003,

Recalling also the United Nations Millennium Declaration[3] and the outcome of the 2005 World Summit,

Recalling further General Assembly resolutions 56/180, 57/242, 58/201, 59/245, 60/208, 61/212, 62/204, 63/228, 64/214 and 65/172 related to the particular needs and problems of landlocked developing countries to be addressed by effectively implementing the Almaty Programme of Action,

Recalling the Declaration of the high-level meeting of the sixty-third session of the General Assembly on the midterm review of the Almaty Programme of Action, of 3 October 2008,[4] which stressed that the higher cost of moving goods across borders for landlocked developing countries puts their products at a competitive disadvantage and that landlocked developing countries continue to face challenges in their efforts to establish efficient transit transport systems,

Recalling also the Asunción Platform for the Doha Development Round, adopted at the Meeting of the Ministers of Landlocked Developing Countries Responsible for Trade, held in Asunción on 10 August 2005, the Ulaanbaatar Declaration adopted at the Meeting of the Ministers of Landlocked Developing Countries Responsible for Trade, held in Ulaanbaatar on 28 and 29 August 2007, as well as the Ezulwini Declaration adopted at the Third Meeting of Ministers of Landlocked Developing Countries Responsible for Trade, held in the Kingdom of Swaziland on 21 and 22 October 2009,

Recalling further the outcome document of the High-level Plenary Meeting of the General Assembly on the Millennium Development Goals[5] that was adopted by Heads of State and Government on 22 September 2010, in which they reiterated

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[1] Report of the International Ministerial Conference of Landlocked and Transit Developing Countries and Donor Countries and International Financial and Development Institutions on Transit Transport Cooperation, Almaty, Kazakhstan, 28 and 29 August 2003 (A/CONF.202/3, annex II).

[2] Ibid., annex I.

[3] See General Assembly resolution 55/2.

[4] See General Assembly resolution 63/2.

[5] See General Assembly resolution 65/1.

their recognition of the special needs of and challenges faced by the landlocked developing countries, caused by their lack of territorial access to the sea and remoteness from world markets, and stressed the need to overcome these vulnerabilities and build their resilience. They called for the full, timely and effective implementation of the Almaty Programme of Action as presented in the Declaration of the high-level meeting of the sixty-third session of the General Assembly on the midterm review of the Almaty Programme of Action,

Recognizing that the development challenges faced by our countries owing to the geographical disadvantage of having no territorial access to the sea and the ensuing serious difficulties for the effective integration of our economies into the multilateral trading system permeate every aspect of the development process, including economic growth, poverty reduction and the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals,

Recognizing also that the primary responsibility for establishing effective transit systems rests with the landlocked and transit developing countries, which need to seek to create conditions in which resources can be generated, attracted and effectively mobilized to address their development challenges, but that their efforts need to be given continued international support by development partners and international and regional organizations in a spirit of shared responsibility, including South-South cooperation and triangular cooperation, and taking into account regional integration agreements,

Expressing support for those landlocked developing countries emerging from conflict with a view to enabling them to rehabilitate and reconstruct, as appropriate, political, social and economic infrastructure and to assisting them in achieving their development priorities in accordance with the goals and targets of the Almaty Programme of Action,

Acknowledging the invaluable and continued support provided by development partners, including the United Nations system, international and regional organizations, bilateral partners, civil society and the private sector, and the role of South-South cooperation with a view to tackling the critical challenge of addressing the special needs of landlocked developing countries, in particular by developing adequate transport infrastructures and establishing transit transport systems,

Expressing our concern about the re-emergence of rising food and energy prices, compounded by the negative impact of climate change, which have adversely impacted the economic and social progress achieved by the landlocked developing countries in recent years and have increased their vulnerability and weakened their ability to achieve the Millennium Development Goals,

Taking note of the annual progress report of the Secretary-General on the implementation of the Almaty Programme of Action,

Adopt the following communiqué:

1. We reaffirm our unwavering commitment towards the accelerated implementation of the Almaty Programme of Action through effective and genuine partnerships between landlocked and transit countries and their development partners as well as between public and private sectors at the national, bilateral, regional and global levels, as these partnerships are essential for the timely achievement of all the internationally agreed development goals, including the

Millennium Development Goals, and full and meaningful integration of the landlocked developing countries into the global economy;

2. We welcome the progress made by the landlocked developing countries, their development partners and transit neighbouring countries towards implementing the priorities of the Almaty Programme of Action, as evidenced by a number of transport and trade facilitation measures that have reduced border delays and inefficiencies; some expansion in transit transport infrastructure development; increased efforts to harmonize norms and standards in the transport sector; improvements in development assistance allocated to the transport, storage and communications sectors of landlocked developing countries; and some increase in foreign direct investment, remittances and debt relief;

3. We remain concerned, however, that despite the increased efforts in implementing the priorities of the Almaty Programme of Action, landlocked developing countries continue to face high trade transaction costs that put their products at a competitive disadvantage, discourage foreign investment and are the main reason behind their continued marginalization within the global economy. Persistent challenges have prevented landlocked developing countries from fully using trade as an instrument for raising domestic savings required to accelerate economic growth and to sustain progress towards the attainment of the internationally agreed development goals, including the Millennium Development Goals;

4. We express concern that inadequate transport infrastructure development, including the state of regional trade corridors, the deterioration of existing stocks, the persistence of key missing links, the lack of efficient inland transport linkages, such as between rail and port facilities, as well as sustainable resources for maintenance remain a major bottleneck to trade expansion for the landlocked developing countries. Transit transport problems still persist, such as insufficient carrying capacity at ports, port and customs clearance delays, fees and obstacles owing to cumbersome customs procedures and other regulatory constraints, and weak legal and institutional arrangements, as well as costly bank transactions;

5. We also express concern about the continued lack of export diversification that makes our economies vulnerable to external shocks, and urge the international community to assist the landlocked developing countries to implement policy measures to strengthen and broaden their productive capacities and enhance value addition to their exports in order to be able to reap available trade opportunities;

6. We are deeply concerned that, while landlocked developing countries suffered tremendously from the impact of the global economic downturn and have only just started on their path to recovery, soaring food prices and commodity price volatility have re-emerged affecting the livelihoods of our populations and hampering our efforts to sustain economic growth. We therefore re-commit to deploy all efforts to strengthen our resilience to the impact of external shocks and enhance further implementation of the Almaty Programme of Action and the achievement of the internationally agreed development goals, including the Millennium Development Goals;

7. In this regard, we urge the international community, development partners and multilateral development institutions, including United Nations

institutions, to scale up support to landlocked developing countries through increased financial and technical support to enable them to cope with multiple external shocks and to mitigate the impact of new and emerging challenges on the most vulnerable segments of their populations;

8. We also call upon international organizations and other research institutions to undertake research on the vulnerability of landlocked developing countries to external shocks and develop a set of vulnerability indicators that can be used for early warning purposes;

9. We recognize that climate change poses a potentially permanent and serious threat to the economic and social development of our countries and can undermine our efforts towards the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals, as we are least prepared to confront the challenges of adapting to climate change and mitigating its effects that would even further aggravate the disadvantages that our countries are facing. We are vulnerable to climate change impacts on agriculture production, frequent occurrence of natural disasters, land degradation and desertification. Other issues that affect landlocked developing countries include: food security, viability of inland fisheries, water availability, erosion of biodiversity and human health. We urge our development partners to provide financial, technological and capacity-building assistance to enable landlocked developing countries to address climate change challenges, in particular by putting in place on a priority basis effective adaptation strategies and appropriate mitigation actions, as well as to provide a special climate change financing facility for landlocked developing countries;

10. We encourage relevant international organizations including the Office of the High Representative for the Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island Developing States, the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, the World Bank, the United Nations Environment Programme and the United Nations regional commissions to assist the landlocked developing countries to conduct studies to better understand the implications of climate change on landlocked developing countries and to develop measures to counter its adverse effects;

11. We underscore the importance of trade facilitation measures for the growth and expansion of the external trade of landlocked developing countries and its positive impact on their economic development. We call upon the international community to ensure that the agreement on trade facilitation in the final outcome of the Doha Development Round contains binding commitments ensuring freedom of transit, strict limits on fees, charges and formalities and transparency as well as common standards for documentation requirements, therefore allowing for the expedite movement, release and clearance of goods. The special needs of the landlocked developing countries must be taken fully into account to assist them to overcome their geographical disadvantages. The ultimate objective must be the lowering of transaction costs by reducing transport time and enhancing certainty in transborder trade;

12. We call for a development-friendly solution to the current impasse in the Doha Round of trade negotiations that could open the way for a successful and ambitious conclusion of the 10-year round. This should increase market access, generate increased trade flows and focus on the needs of the landlocked developing countries. Emphasis should remain on the commitment to make operationally

effective the principle of special and differential treatment for developing countries; to the parallel elimination of all forms of export subsidies; and to substantial reductions in trade-distorting domestic support, in accordance with the mandate of the Doha Round. The final outcome should also adequately address the issue of technical assistance and capacity-building;

13. We underscore the importance of the thirteenth session of the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD), to be held in April 2012 in Doha. We will make the necessary efforts in the negotiating process to contribute to a successful outcome of the Conference, placing development at the centre of the global agenda, to achieve inclusive and sustainable growth for developing countries. We must ensure that the Conference makes a difference and contributes in a very real way to the development efforts of all, in particular the most vulnerable. We shall effectively identify the challenges and actions needed by the landlocked developing countries to overcome our disadvantages. We also call upon developed and developing countries to support the group of countries with special needs in their efforts;

14. We also call upon relevant United Nations and other international organizations to provide greater support to strengthen the negotiating capacities of landlocked developing countries and their ability to implement trade facilitation measures;

15. We call for the provision of enhanced technical assistance to those landlocked developing countries that are still outside the rules-based multilateral trading system and wish to accede to the World Trade Organization (WTO). We stress the need for taking into account the individual levels of development and the special needs and problems caused by the geographical disadvantage of being landlocked during the accession process and that all provisions on special and differential treatment reflected in the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade and in all WTO agreements shall be granted to all acceding landlocked developing countries. Targeted technical assistance should be provided to acceding landlocked developing countries during all stages of the process;

16. We reiterate our request that development assistance provided in the context of the Aid for Trade initiative should give adequate consideration to the special needs and requirements of landlocked developing countries. Areas of targeted support should include capacity-building for the formulation of trade policies, participation in trade negotiations, implementation of trade facilitation measures, implementation of international agreements, investment in infrastructure for transport, telecommunications and utilities and strengthening of productive capacities with a view to increasing the competitiveness of our countries' products in export markets. We attach great importance to the Aid for Trade initiative and are committed to enhancing our participation in the monitoring process to better articulate our trade needs and priorities for support;

17. We underscore the prominent role that foreign direct investment plays in accelerating development and poverty reduction through employment, transfer of managerial and technological know-how and non-debt-creating flows of capital, as well as its key role in providing infrastructure for transport, telecommunications and utilities. We call on capital exporting countries to provide greater financial assistance and support to the efforts of landlocked developing countries to secure foreign direct investment by adopting and implementing economic, financial and

legal incentives to encourage foreign direct investment flows to landlocked developing countries;

18. We call upon our bilateral and multilateral development partners not only to maintain current levels of official development assistance to landlocked developing countries, but to further raise commitments in order to support transit transport infrastructure development and trade facilitation projects in landlocked and transit developing countries, therefore enhancing intraregional connectivity, completing missing links and ensuring the proper functioning of strategic sea corridors;

19. We call for donor support through greater debt relief to help landlocked developing countries make progress towards the realization of the Almaty Programme objectives and achievement of the internationally agreed development goals, including the Millennium Development Goals;

20. We commend the efforts made through South-South cooperation in the areas of transit transport cooperation between landlocked and transit developing countries and request a scaling-up of the efforts that can help the landlocked developing countries to address the complex and severe development challenges that they face owing to their geographical disadvantages, thereby leading to the acceleration of the implementation of the Almaty Programme of Action;

21. We are committed to the realization of the mandate of the international think tank for the landlocked developing countries and call on all landlocked developing countries to become signatories to its multilateral agreement. We commend the steps taken by the Government of Mongolia in advancing the operationalization of the international think tank for the landlocked developing countries in Ulaanbaatar. We call upon international organizations, in particular, the World Bank, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), UNCTAD and the regional commissions, donor countries and other leading centres of excellence to support the operational activities of the think tank;

22. We note that the Intergovernmental Agreement on the Asian Highway Network in 2003, which came into force in 2005, and the Intergovernmental Agreement on the Trans-Asian Railway Network in 2006, which entered into force in June 2009, have helped to promote investment for the development, maintenance and upgrading of the Asian Highway priority routes and of the Trans-Asian Railway Network, which have greatly benefited the region. We therefore call upon international organizations and donor countries to support the effective implementation of the projects identified under the Intergovernmental Agreements;

23. We take note of efforts being deployed by African landlocked developing countries to address the legal bottlenecks experienced by Africa's transit transport system owing to the lack of integrated and standardized road infrastructure. In this context, we support the work undertaken by the Office of the High Representative for the Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island Developing States in consultation with the Economic Commission for Africa, the African Union Commission and the African Development Bank. We request the Office of the High Representative to further its efforts in the promotion of an African transport infrastructure intergovernmental agreement, particularly for the Trans-African Highway;

24. We reaffirm our full and firm commitment to pursue a collective and constructive course of action at the United Nations and other relevant forums for the promotion and protection of our common interests. We emphasize that the needs and special problems of landlocked developing countries should be adequately addressed at the relevant upcoming global forums, in particular the Eighth WTO Ministerial Conference in December 2011 and the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development in 2012;

25. We encourage our development partners, including donors and the international financial and development institutions, as well as private entities, to make voluntary contributions to the Trust Fund established by the Secretary-General to support the activities related to the follow-up of the implementation of the Almaty Programme of Action;

26. We request the Office of the High Representative for the Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island Developing States to continue to mobilize and coordinate international support and resources for the effective implementation of the Almaty Programme of Action and the Declaration on the midterm review, in accordance with its mandate;

27. We invite the United Nations General Assembly to decide on the convening of the comprehensive 10-year review conference of the Almaty Programme of Action in 2013, in accordance with paragraph 49 of the Programme of Action. We stress that the comprehensive review shall represent an important opportunity for landlocked and transit developing countries and our development partners to critically assess the implementation of the Almaty Programme of Action, in particular its best practices and weaknesses, and develop a new common action-oriented strategic framework for the next decade, based on scaled-up partnerships among landlocked and transit developing countries with enhanced support from our development partners, with a view to effectively assisting our countries to effectively develop transit transport infrastructure and ensure connectivity through regional strategic trade corridors to access seaports or regional trade partners, therefore facilitating our integration in an increasingly complex and changing world economy. The new framework shall also provide for effective arrangements for follow-up, review and monitoring of its implementation. The Office of the High Representative shall coordinate the preparatory process for the review. UNCTAD, UNDP, the World Bank, the regional commissions and other relevant United Nations international and regional organizations shall provide substantive and technical assistance for that process. The review should be preceded by subregional, regional and substantive preparations in a most effective, well-structured and broad participatory manner. Two meetings of the intergovernmental preparatory committee should be convened in early 2013;

28. We welcome with appreciation the offer of the Government of Kazakhstan to host the Fourth Meeting of Trade Ministers of our Group as well as a preparatory global review meeting on international trade and trade facilitation in Almaty during the first half of 2012;

29. We request the Secretary-General of the United Nations to undertake all necessary measures to provide the Office of the High Representative for the Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island Developing States with the necessary resources to enable it to carry out its tasks

related to the preparations for the comprehensive review of the Almaty Programme of Action and other related mandates given by the General Assembly;

30. We express our sincere appreciation to the efforts made by Paraguay, during its two-year tenure as Chair of the Group of Landlocked Developing Countries in New York, as well as members of the Bureau, in advancing matters related to the development of our Group.